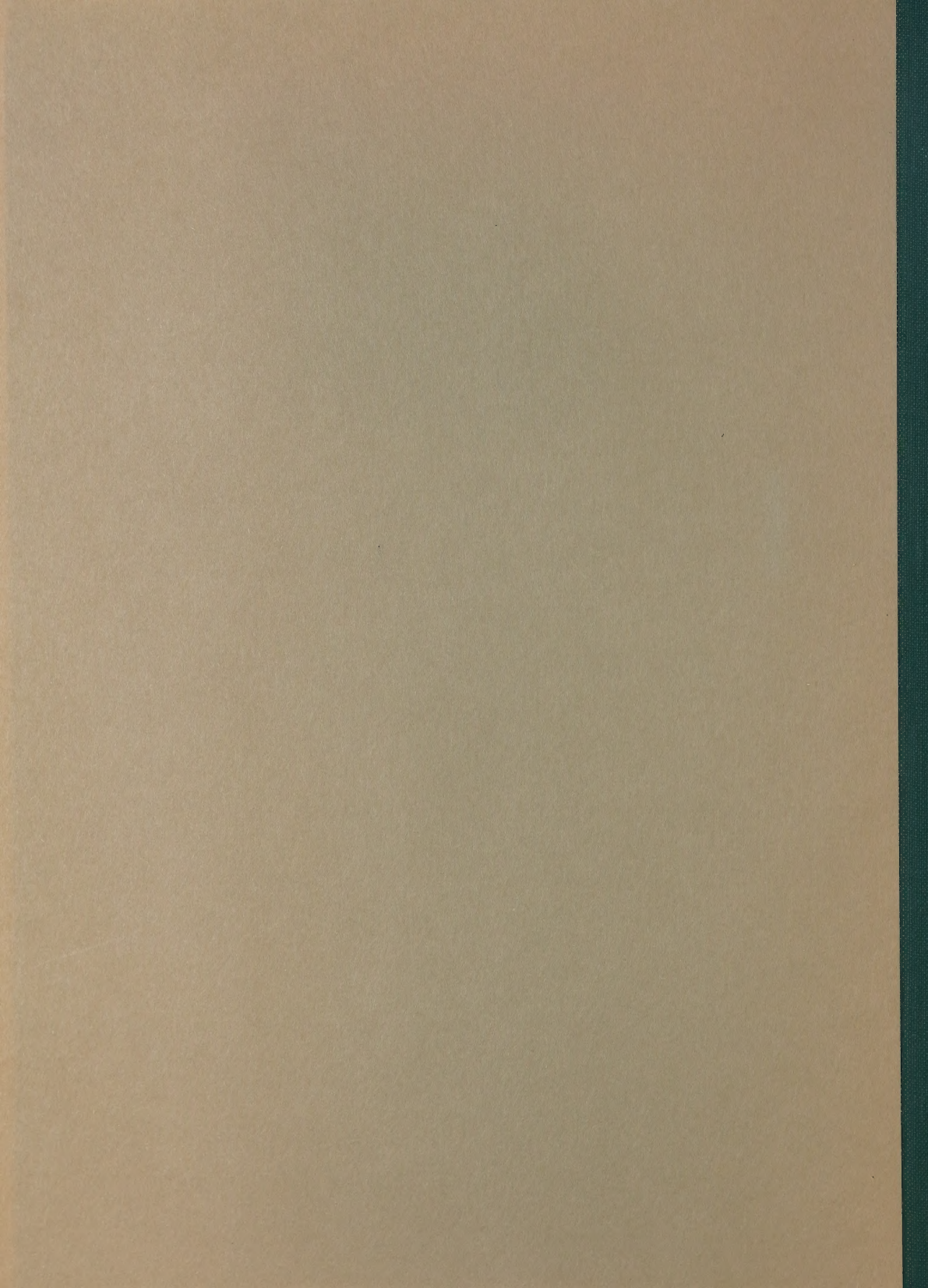


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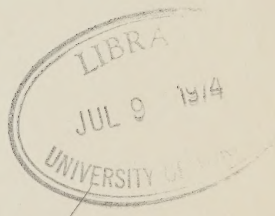


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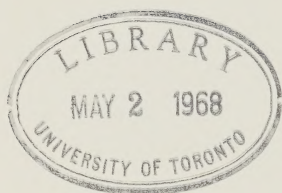
THE EMPLOYABILITY OF THE OLDER WORKER

A Review of Research Findings

by
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Economics and Research Branch, Department of Labour



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CONTENTS

	Page
<u>PART I - EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND THE OLDER WORKER</u>	1
The Effect of Private Pension Plans on the Employment of Older Workers	1
The Effect of Fixed Hiring and Retirement Ages on the Employment of Older Workers	4
The Effect of Seniority and Other Union Demands on the Employment of Older Workers	5
Summary	6
<u>PART II - THE WORK CAPACITY OF THE OLDER WORKER</u>	8
Proneness to Injury and Disability among Older Workers	8
Personality Traits and Work Habits of Older Workers	10
Output and Performance Ratings of Older Workers	13
Limitations of Research Methods in the Study of Employability	14
<u>PART III - THE WORK DISADVANTAGES OF THE OLDER WORKER</u> ..	17
Curtailment of Job Activity	18
Conclusions	20
<u>PART IV - LABOUR MARKET DEMANDS AND THE OLDER WORKER</u> ...	22
A Change in Occupation in Later Years	23
(i) Initial Job Selection	24
(ii) Mobility	25
(iii) Re-training	25
<u>FOOTNOTES</u>	27

I - EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND THE OLDER WORKER

Of the various issues that have grown up about the problem of old age, none perhaps has attracted more attention nor led to more disagreement than the nature of the difficulties faced by persons of advancing years in securing and retaining employment. That persons of advancing years do face difficulties in securing and retaining employment is a fact beyond questioning. Nor is there any questioning the seriousness of the resulting problem, whether the concern is with the economic, social and psychological welfare of those persons facing employment difficulties or with the loss to national production resulting from the failure of society to make the fullest and most effective use of its work force. What is open to question, however, is the extent to which the employment difficulties of older people result from the free and natural workings of the labour market or are a consequence of artificially created impediments to the employment of persons of advanced years.

The economist concerned with this problem starts with the bias that the forces in a free enterprise economy will make for the most effective utilization of a nation's labour force. Any tampering with this free play of economic forces runs the grave risk in his view of making for a less economic use of labour (or capital). Thus, with respect to the older worker, the inclination is to believe, unless there is clear evidence that such is not the case, that if it is good business to employ older workers then such workers will be employed. If preference is given to younger workers in hiring, or large numbers of workers are retired at 65, the possibility is that this is so because it is good business, from the point of view of the employer and, in the long run, of the nation.

No economist, however, would deny that in the world in which we live much is done that makes for an uneconomic use of labour or capital. Arrangements are entered into designed to produce a particular desired result but which, unexpectedly, produce as well another result not at all desired. Something of this sort certainly has occurred with respect to the employment of older workers. Various arrangements entered into by the employer, or by the employer and the state, have disturbed the free working of economic forces in the labour market with the result that one cannot always be certain whether employer practices do make for the most economic use of the nation's labour force.

Unfortunately, the precise effect of these employer practices is not easy to determine. It is clear that some of them do account for the difficulties faced by older persons in securing and retaining employment. Others of them, however, just as clearly have the effect of sheltering older workers from the full play of economic forces in the labour market. Thus, the over-all effect is one which may or may not be unfavourable to persons of advanced years.

The Effect of Private Pension Plans on the Employment of Older Workers

Of the various obstacles to the employment of older workers, private pension schemes would appear to be the most important. A survey undertaken by the Temple University Bureau of Economic and Business Research and the

Pennsylvania Bureau of Employment Security in 1952-53 attempted to uncover the main reasons for the reluctance of firms to employ older workers. A total of 359 firms, selected according to accepted sampling techniques to give due consideration to size, geographic location, and type of operation, were included in the study. When asked the reason why they restricted the employment of older workers, 6.4 per cent of these firms gave pensions as one of the reasons, 2.5 per cent, insurance costs and .3 per cent, workmen's compensation. When asked, however, what factors tended to limit the feasibility of hiring older workers, 16.6 per cent gave pensions as a factor, 15.5 per cent, insurance and 11.2 per cent, workmen's compensation.(1) In a study of employer attitudes towards older workers conducted in 1955 by Mill and Factory magazine, 16 per cent of the employer respondents, roughly one-half of the respondents reporting that they had pension plans, listed pension and insurance costs as an obstacle to the hiring of older workers.(2)

Whether, in fact, employers have been influenced in their employment policies by the belief that the hiring of older workers involved increased pension, insurance and workmen's compensation costs has not been easy to determine. An article in The American Journal of Sociology, July 1944, by Otto Pollak, "Discrimination Against Older Workers in Industry," attempted to show by the use of census data that the higher costs of employing older workers because of compensation insurance, private pension plans and increased rates of group insurance were not the real reasons for the restrictive policies of firms in the hiring of older workers. These were given as the reasons to cover up the real reasons.(3) A study of the effect of group insurance costs on the hiring of older workers carried out by Charles A. Siegfried of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company offered some confirmation of Pollak's claims. A comparison of the age distribution of persons insured under group life insurance plans with the age distribution of persons in the labour force of the nation as a whole engaged in non-agricultural industries, revealed that for the year 1950 the proportion of persons at ages 45 to 64 in the insured group was just about the same as the proportion in the labour force as a whole. In the insured group, the proportion at ages 45-64 was 31.7 per cent of the total insureds aged 16-64. Among those in the labour force employed in non-agricultural industries, the total number in the age group 45-64 was 31.8 per cent of the whole group aged 16-64. A further test was made using a sample of 170,000 Pennsylvania employees at ages 16-64 insured under group life insurance policies issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. In this sample the insured persons aged 45-64 constituted 32.7 per cent of the total compared with the 31.8 per cent in the total labour force. For the age group 45-54, the proportion for the insured lives was 19.6 per cent as compared with 19.4 per cent in the labour force as a whole. For the age 55-64 group, the ratio was 13.1 per cent as compared with 12.4 per cent for the labour force as a whole.(4) No comparable data was offered by Siegfried respecting pension plans and workmen's compensation, but since so many companies that had retirement or disability plans also had group life insurance plans, the effects of the former he felt would show up in the figures for group life insurance.(5)

Investigations Bureau of Equipment Security in 1952-53 attempted to uncover the main reasons for the reluctance of firms to employ older workers. A total of 137 firms, selected according to accepted sampling techniques to give due consideration to size, geographic location, and type of operation, were included in the study. When asked the reasons why they restricted the employment of older workers, 64 per cent of these firms gave pension as one of the reasons, 57 per cent, insurance costs and 5 per cent, workers' compensation. When asked, however, what factors tended to limit the feasibility of hiring older workers, 56 per cent gave pension as a factor, 57 per cent, insurance and 11 per cent, workers' compensation. (1) In a study of employer attitudes towards older workers conducted in 1952 by Will and Eckert magazine, 10 per cent of the employer respondents roughly one-half of the respondents reporting that they had pension plans, listed pension and insurance costs as an obstacle to the hiring of older workers. (2)

Further, in fact, employers have been influenced in their employment policies by the belief that the hiring of older workers involved increased pension, insurance and workers' compensation costs but not been easy to determine. As stated in the *Business Journal of Washington*, July 1944, by Otto Pollak, "Discrimination Against Older Workers in Industry," attempted to show by the use of census data that the higher costs of employing older workers because of pension, insurance and workers' compensation costs were the main reasons for their reluctance to hire older workers. (3)

Statistics of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, published in 1950, revealed that for the year 1950 the proportion of persons aged 45 to 64 in the insured group was just about the same as the proportion in the labour force as a whole. In the insured group, the proportion of ages 45-64 was 32.7 per cent of the total insured aged 16-64. Among those in the labour force employed in non-agricultural industries, the total number in the age group 45-64 was 31.5 per cent of the whole group aged 16-64. A further test was made using a sample of 170,000 Metropolitan employees aged 16-64 insured under group life insurance policies issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. In this sample the insured persons aged 45-64 constituted 32.7 per cent of the total compared with the 31.5 per cent in the total labour force. For the age group 45-64, the proportion for the insured group was 32.7 per cent as compared with 31.5 per cent in the labour force as a whole. For the age 35-44 group, the ratio was 33.1 per cent as compared with 31.4 per cent for the labour force as a whole. (4) No comparable data was obtained by Statistics regarding pension plans and workers' compensation, but since so many companies that had retirement or disability plans also had group life insurance plans, the effects of the former he felt would show up in the figures for group life insurance. (5)

A later study, however, carried out by Dr. Dan M. McGill of the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania, led to very different conclusions. A comparison between non-agricultural hirings in the year 1950 with the age distribution of new entrants into the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company group annuity contracts during 1952, showed that whereas 17.4 per cent of new hirings in the manufacturing industry in 1950 represented persons 45 and over, only 11.8 per cent of new entrants into pension plans in 1952 were to be found in that age group. For persons aged 55 and beyond the discrepancy was even greater: 7.1 per cent compared to 2.6 per cent.(6) A study carried out by the U.S. Bureau of Employment Security offered results similar to those produced by Dr. McGill. In six of the seven areas surveyed, a larger percentage of workers 45 and over were to be found in employment not covered by pension plans than in employment so covered: in Los Angeles 34.7 per cent compared to 29.8, in Miami 30.1 per cent compared to 30.4, in Philadelphia 42.6 per cent compared to 40.4, in Seattle 43.4 per cent compared to 30.4, and in Worcester 41.3 per cent compared to 38.1. In Detroit, the one exception, the percentages were 32.5 and 35 respectively. For all seven areas, 36.0 and 33.3.(7) An analysis of factors influencing hiring practices offered what appeared to be even more convincing evidence of the effect of pension plans. In the seven areas surveyed, of every 100 workers hired by firms employing 50 or more workers without pension plan coverage, 45 of them were workers 45 and over; for firms with pension plan coverage the number was 16. For all firms, workers 45 years of age and over accounted for 25 per cent of the hirings in employment without pension plans, contrasted with 14 per cent in jobs with such plans.(8) On the other hand, however, the separation rate of workers 45 and over was considerably higher in non-pension than pension firms. For all seven areas studied, the separation rate in non-pension firms was 27 per cent, in pension firms 17.6 per cent. For the Detroit area, the percentages were 20.7 and 16.8; for the Los Angeles area, 29.4 and 16.7; Minneapolis-St. Paul, 22.2 and 20.4; Philadelphia, 20 and 13.3; Seattle, 31.4 and 20.1; Worcester, 21.3 and 18.1.(9)

What would appear clear from these figures is that the hiring of workers 45 and over is affected by the existence of pension plans but this effect is partly offset by the reduced separation rate, so that the total effect upon the employment of older workers is not as great as at first glance it might appear. That it has some effect, however, would appear evident from the fact that, apart from the Detroit area, a larger percentage of workers 45 and over were to be found in the non-pension than pension firms in the areas surveyed by the U.S. Bureau of Employment Security. The belief of employers that the hiring of older workers will increase their pension and other security costs must be taken account of as a factor affecting employment policy.

The extent to which this belief has any basis in fact is another matter. Studies of various private pension schemes in effect would appear to make clear two things: first, that costs are not appreciably increased by the employment of older workers; and second, what increase of costs is involved results largely from the nature of the pension scheme adopted.

There is nothing inherent in pension plans as such that makes it impossible for employers to hire older workers or retain them beyond normal retirement age. Group insurance plans offer even less of an obstacle to the employment of older workers.(10) However small in fact the differential may be, in terms of the total labour costs of the employer, the differential may nevertheless have considerable significance if all other things in the competitive struggle of older and younger workers for jobs are equal. In a large number of instances that would appear to be the case.

Thus, clearly, changes in the nature of prevailing private pension schemes by way of making them more flexible would make more favourable the position of the older worker seeking a job. What is not so clear, however, is the effect such changes would have upon the position of older workers already in employment. Hiring rates can never be considered apart from separation rates, and, with a move to more flexible pension schemes, the separation rate among older workers would undoubtedly increase. If pension funds were vested, employers would feel under less obligation to keep in employment their pensioned employees.

What this is intended to argue is that private pension schemes do interfere with the free play of economic forces in the labour market but in a way that favours the older worker as well as discriminates against him. On balance, the effect would appear to be discriminatory but how discriminatory one can only know by knowing what the position of the older worker would be in a fully competitive labour market.

The Effect of Fixed Hiring and Retirement Ages on the Employment of Older Workers

If the above conclusion is true of private pension schemes, it is also true of the effect of the policy followed by many employers of setting a rigid age for hiring new employees. Such a policy may be based on unfounded beliefs or on prejudice. The employer cannot always be trusted to act in terms of sound business practice. Certainly, it can be shown that any policy of setting a rigid age for hiring will result, in particular cases, in the exclusion of highly desirable workers and the employment in their stead of less desirable workers. One cannot be certain, however, that such a policy is as irrational, or that its over-all effect is as unfavourable to the older worker, as it might appear. Such irrationality as there is may spring from a strong attachment of the employer to older workers in his employ rather than to a prejudice in favour of younger workers. The establishment of a rigid age for hiring may be related to a general policy of maintaining a satisfactory age balance in the work force. The employer may face the choice of hiring workers of all ages and dealing ruthlessly with those older workers in his employ who are no longer wholly satisfactory or of setting a rigid hiring age and keeping in employment older workers to whom he has a strong attachment even though they could be replaced by more satisfactory workers. Thus, a more flexible hiring policy, while clearly having the effect of increasing the hiring rate among older workers, would also have the effect of increasing among such workers the separation rate.

With respect to schemes of retirement at a fixed age, much the same can be said. Where such schemes are rigidly adhered to, the man who reaches a certain specified age is released from employment without regard to his capacities, health or desire to work. Many of these men would undoubtedly continue in employment many years longer if they were not prevented from so doing. Before the over-all unfavourable effects of such schemes can be estimated, however, here again account must be taken of the extent to which these schemes further as well as impede the employment of older workers. If the worker is to be arbitrarily released from employment at the age of 65, his chances of being kept in employment until he is 65 are immeasurably increased. Given no system of retirement whatsoever, and with it no sense of obligation on the part of employers to keep workers on to a certain age, the effect clearly would be to keep in employment more workers beyond the age of 65 but also to reduce the number of workers in employment who had not yet attained the age of 65, both by increasing the rate of separation among this under-65 group and reducing the rate of hiring.

The Effect of Seniority and Other Union Demands on the Employment of Older Workers

If attention is turned to the operation of seniority rules in employment, the effect is one that appears to favour the older worker. Certainly, where seniority rules obtain, the effect is that of strengthening the hold on employment of older workers who already have jobs. Here, however, account must be taken of the effect of such rules in discouraging employers from hiring older workers. The older worker newly employed has little chance to gain sufficient seniority to put him in line for promotion to the better positions in the firm. Thus, seniority rules, reducing the separation rate among older workers, reduce as well the hiring rate.

Trade unionism, likewise, has tended both to increase and to restrict the employment of older workers. Provisions have been written into many collective bargaining agreements to make more favourable the position of the older worker in securing and retaining employment.(11) The seniority system is largely an accomplishment of trade unionism. There would seem little question that the effect of unionism has been to strengthen considerably the job security of the older worker and to protect him from exploitation by employers in search of cheap labour. Unionism may also have had some effect, on a formal level, in making for more liberal employer hiring policies.

On the other side, however, to the extent that unionism is responsible for the rigid wage structure of modern industry, its effect has been to increase some of the difficulties faced by older workers in securing and retaining employment. Employers are not left wholly free to pay a man what he is thought to be worth. Adjustments of pay with declining performance become difficult if not impossible in face of union pressure to maintain a fixed level of wages. Employers, as a result, often find themselves compelled to release from employment those workers no longer able to maintain a certain level of performance. And they are naturally reluctant to engage older workers

whose performance may not equal that of younger men, if no differential in pay is possible. Thus, it is not surprising that more older workers tend to be employed in non-unionized than in unionized industries, though under conditions less favourable to labour generally and to those older workers in employment, and this in spite of the deliberate efforts made by many unions to encourage older worker employment.

In the final analysis, of course, collective bargaining has done nothing more than accentuate the general effect of the modern wage system upon the employment of older workers. In societies where the wage system does not operate there is no older worker problem. But in such societies there is very usually a problem of widespread economic poverty among the old. Though employment does not terminate until the worker is incapacitated or dies, earnings closely approximate productivity, and what is in effect partial employment becomes general among the older age population. The wage system keeps the vast majority of older workers in full employment and in receipt of full earnings until at least a certain age is reached even though the work performance of many of them may be sharply declining. Thus, on balance, the effect of the wage system, and of trade unionism, may be to make more favourable the general conditions of older worker employment though at the price of accentuating the difficulties faced by certain older workers in securing and holding jobs.

Summary

Unfortunately, in a system of free enterprise where industry is subject to rapid technological change and to change in consumer tastes, where cyclical fluctuations occur in business conditions, and where techniques of mass production require a certain level of performance on the part of all workers, great numbers of older workers find themselves out of employment or no longer a part of the labour force. There can be no argument that anything done to change this situation that would not act unfavourably upon general conditions of employment would be beneficial to the older worker group and to society as a whole. With respect, however, to the effects of private pension schemes, the establishment of rigid hiring ages, schemes of retirement at a fixed age, seniority rules and trade union collective bargaining, it is not at all clear that any changes that were made would materially improve the position of the older worker. These various institutional arrangements do discriminate against the older worker. But they discriminate as well against the younger worker. If their effect is to make it more difficult for certain older workers to get jobs, or for certain older workers to remain in employment or in the labour force, their effect is also to make it easier for certain other older workers to remain in employment or, in particular instances, to get jobs. Thus, on the one side, it was revealed by the U.S. Department of Labor Study of older worker adjustment to labour market practices that while older workers comprised 40 per cent of the job seekers at the time of the survey they obtained only 22 per cent of the jobs filled by employers during the survey year but, on the other side, that while workers 45 and over held about 35 per cent of the jobs,

they experienced less than one-quarter of the annual total separations. It cannot safely be argued that the hiring rate of older workers is revealing of employment practices discriminating against older workers without at the same time arguing that the separation rate of older workers is revealing of employment practices discriminating in their favour.

If, of course, something closer to full employment could be maintained, and at the same time the size of the labour force increased, a greater number of older workers could be kept in employment and a greater number of older people kept in the labour force without there being any unfavourable effects. But this is not the real question at issue. Rather the question is whether, given an industrial work force of a fixed size, present employment practices make for the most effective use of the manpower available. In seeking the answer to this question, it is essential to keep in mind the close relationship between the three different aspects of the problem of the older worker: hiring, separation and retirement. The failure to do this has led to a good deal of the confusion surrounding the general problem. Changes in rates of hiring, separation or retirement will react on the other two with the result that the choice may well be between the employment of one older worker rather than another rather than between the employment of an older or a younger worker.

Still, given the fact that more older than younger workers do find themselves out of jobs, and that a large proportion of the older age population has ceased to be a part of the labour force, it is clear that hiring, separation and retiring practices in combination do favour the younger worker over the older. To the extent that this is the case, the question is whether younger workers are more employable than older workers or whether older workers are unfairly discriminated against.

11 - THE WORK CAPACITY OF THE OLDER WORKER

Efforts to discover the work capacity, or employability, of older workers have, in general, followed along one or other of three main lines of enquiry: first, a study of the over-all performance of older workers on the job in comparison with that of younger workers; second, a study of the particular kinds of difficulties faced by older workers in employment, or third, a study of the characteristics of older workers and, in particular, of older workers unemployed or retired. We turn first to a consideration of studies of work performance.

What studies of this type have attempted to do is to take particular characteristics of older workers, or sets of characteristics, and by means of statistical records, employer ratings, or personnel records, seek to show how older workers compare with younger workers.

Proneness to Injury and Disability Among Older Workers

Thus, using statistical records drawn from three different surveys, Max D. Kossoris of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, attempted, in an article published in the Monthly Labor Review in 1940, to analyse the relation of age to industrial injuries. In four plants in New York state, in 1937, two of them public utilities and two manufacturing, with a working force of about 26,000, workers between 40 and 54 years of age had injury rates only about two-thirds as high as workers under 21 (10.67 compared to 16.64) and 70 per cent as high as workers between 21 and 29 (10.67 compared to 14.57). The rates for the age 40-54 group were about the same as those for workers between 30 and 39 (10.67 compared to 9.65), while the rate for workers of 60 and over (14.81) was lower than for workers under 21 (16.64) and about the same as for those between 21 and 29 years of age (14.57).

The same trend was shown by an analysis of about 350,000 industrial injuries reported to the Wisconsin Industrial Commission during the period 1919-38. By comparing the number of gainful workers by age groups in Milwaukee in 1930 with the number of compensated injuries over the period 1919-38 by age groups, it was revealed that the percentage of total injuries for successive age groups above 21 years closely paralleled the percentage of total gainful workers in those age groups. Indeed, only in the under-21, the 21-25 and the 56-60 age groups was the percentage of injuries reported greater than the per cent of gainful workers in these age groups (10.2 and 7.9, 16.8 and 16.5, and 4.7 and 4.4).

An analysis of the Swiss National Accident Insurance Fund, 1930-1934, with more than 95,000 reported disabilities, showed that for every 1,000 man-years of exposure to the hazard of industrial injury older workers had fewer disabling injuries than younger workers. For the age group 20-34, the rate was 211; for the age group 35-44, 171; for the age group 45-54, 142, and for the age group 55-64, 117. For the still older age groups, the rate continued to decline, 85 for the 65-69 group and 50 for the 70-and-over group.

Once injured, however, permanent impairment or death was more likely to result in the case of the older than the younger worker, and, where permanent impairment or death did not result, the healing period was longer for older than for younger workers. In Wisconsin, with 348,676 compensation cases, the death rate for workers 51-55 was twice that of workers 21-25 (12.47 compared to 6.43). For the 61-65 group it rose to 17.40. Data from other surveys showed a similar trend. Of the cases dealt with by the Swiss National Accident Insurance Fund, the number of deaths per 1,000 accidents was 1.99 for the age group 20-24, 6.23 for the age group 50-54 and 8.94 for the age group 60-64.

The rate of permanent impairment was similarly higher for the older age groups. Using the Wisconsin data, the rate was found to be 79 per 1,000 injuries for the 21-25 age group, 97.7 for the 51-55 age group and 104.5 for the 61-65 age group. Using somewhat different data for the state of New York, relating to the years 1933-1937, the rate was found to be 208.5 for the 20-29 age group, 294.5 for the 50-59 age group and 308.5 for the 60-69 age group.

The rate of temporary total disability was also higher for the older age groups. Data derived from the survey of the four plants in New York state showed for ages 21 to 24 an average healing period of 23 days compared with 26 for the age group 25-29, 30 for the age group 40-44 and 34 for ages 55 and over. The Wisconsin data, covering the years 1927 and 1928, showed an average of 21.8 days per temporary disability for ages 23-27, 25.3 for ages 38-42, 27.8 for ages 53-57 and 30.5 for ages 63-67. The Swiss data showed the same trend.(12)

A later study by Kossoris of absenteeism and injury experience of older workers, covering 17,817 workers, led to findings of a somewhat similar sort to those revealed by his study of industrial injuries. Absenteeism was found to be highest among workers under 20, after which it declined steadily until the low point was reached in the 55-59 age group (from 5.5 days lost per 100 to 2.8). The rate of absenteeism increased for men over 65 but still compared favourably to the rate for men in their thirties and forties and was considerably less than that for men under 20 and in their twenties. The record of older workers with respect to work injuries was found to be as good as or better than the record of younger workers. The frequency rate (per million hours worked) of disabling injuries was 9.7 for all age groups but only 7.8 for those from 50 to 54. For the age group 55-59 it was 10.1, but no age group over 50 had a rate as high as the group 35-44. Respecting injuries requiring only first aid, the rate was found to be highest for workers in their twenties and lowest for those over 40. The rate for all groups of workers over 50 ranged from one-half to a quarter of the rate for workers in their twenties.(13)

Various other attempts to compare accident and absenteeism rates of older and younger workers by the use of general statistical data have led to findings in most cases not greatly different from those of Kossoris. Thus, W.P.D. Logan, by using the figures secured through the monthly survey of sickness in England and Wales, endeavoured to show that the incapacity

rate did not spectacularly rise in the older age groups. In an average month of 1950, it was shown, almost 9 per cent of men of working ages (16-64) had some incapacity in the month, and for those 65 and over the proportion increased only to 11 per cent. It was mainly in the group with incapacity of more than 10 days that the elderly men were in excess, their proportion (5.8 per cent) being nearly double that for younger men (3.2 per cent); the result of this was a quite definitely higher average incapacity rate among older than younger men: 1.6 days per man per month, compared with .9 days.(14) An analysis of 4,828 industrial accidents of all types, by A.F. Stevens, showed that the duration of injuries increased with age and that a relatively larger number of the serious cases fell into the older age groups.(15) A study by S. Barkin, based upon the records of 282 compensated factory accidents, showed that the rate of accidents fell until the age of 60 was reached and rose slightly after 60.(16) A somewhat similar study by J. Mann of all accidental injuries reported by 1,300 males and 700 females in an ordnance factory showed that among the males the rate of accidents fell with age and among the females rose with age.(17) A study by Sutherland, Harris and Smithers of all accidental injuries reported by 4,000 factory workers showed accident rates falling with age.(18) On the other hand, a study by J. Klebba, based upon data collected from 700,000 households relating to non-fatal accidents causing over six days absence, showed that the rate of accidents among manual workers rose with age, though it fell with age among non-manual workers.(19) Similarly, the study of Dwight L. Palmer and John A. Brownell of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, based upon the records of two large companies in which the nature of the operations performed by workers were alike, showed that while in the first plant the frequency, severity and cost of accidents decreased as age increased, in the second plant frequency and severity as clearly increased with age, and costs showed a general tendency to rise.(20)

The availability of statistical records of various sorts has made possible a very full investigation of the problem of accident frequency. Space does not permit the examination of all the various studies in this field.(21) Unfortunately, in attempting to compare other characteristics of older and younger workers, no comparable statistical data are available. Reliance has had to be placed upon surveys using questionnaires of various sorts or upon the examination of personnel records.(22)

Personality Traits and Work Habits of Older Employees

One of the early surveys of employer opinion of older workers was that carried out by the Survey Committee on the Problems of Ageing and the Care of Old People of the Nuffield Foundation in 1945, when a questionnaire was addressed to the various employers who were members of the Industrial Welfare Society. The survey covered 455 firms, employing 11,154 men and 2,340 women above pensionable age. By a majority of five to one, members stated that elderly workers did not earn less than other workers. Approximately 60 per cent of all 13,500 men and women were in their former jobs, while 40 per cent had had to change their jobs through advancing age

Approximately 15 per cent of the elderly men and 10 per cent of the elderly women were in jobs specially selected for them. Only one-tenth of the firms found that absenteeism was higher among the elderly than among other workers, and one-third of them found it definitely lower. The remainder could detect no difference.(23)

A report of a survey on the practice and experience of its 400 member firms by the Industrial Welfare Society, carried out on the suggestion of the National Old People's Welfare Committee, offered a detailed analysis of information provided by employers regarding the type of work engaged in by workers over 65 and the performance of such workers. Of the 376 firms surveyed, 7 per cent had found elderly workers a burden on the training scheme; 5 per cent reported satisfactory results. Answers secured indicated that most firms found elderly workers had a stabilizing influence on their labour force; they were felt to be more reliable and conscientious, better timekeepers, to produce better quality work and, while not as fast as younger workers, to work more steadily.(24)

A survey seeking the views of personnel officials in Greater Cleveland carried out by Arthur J. Nostzel, Jr., revealed that the difficulties of utilizing older workers were found principally in the processes of selection, placement and work re-assignment of semi-skilled workers. Selection, it was indicated, was made difficult since individual differences become greater as persons grow older and, as a result, some firms preferred to hire a person pensioned from another company than a younger man. Problems of placement, and of re-assignment of work, resulted from the lack of skill of foremen in handling older workers and the sensitiveness and possessiveness of older workers about their jobs.(25)

A survey in 1952 by the Temple University Bureau of Economic and Business Research, of 162 firms employing more than 1,000 workers, sought through a special questionnaire to secure employer opinions of older as compared with younger workers. Of the 97 per cent of the companies that answered the question, 4.1 per cent stated that with regard to quantity of production the record of older workers was considerably above average, 16.5 per cent that it was somewhat above average, 39.9 per cent that there was little difference, 36 per cent that it was somewhat below average, and 3.1 per cent that it was considerably below average. Respecting quality of production, 49 per cent of the 94 answering this part of the questionnaire felt that older workers were considerably above the average, 21.2 per cent somewhat above average, 22.3 per cent that there was little difference, 6.4 per cent somewhat below average, and 10 per cent considerably below average.(26)

Efforts to go beyond such purely subjective data as that provided by opinion surveys, and seek more objective evidence respecting the performance of older workers, have led to a great variety of studies involving the use, in one way or another, of personnel records. Only a few of such studies can be examined.

As part of a general research project under the direction of Dr. S.L. Pressey and supported by the Ohio State University Development Fund, a number of studies of older worker performance in particular industries or business establishments have been carried out. A study by Cover and Pressey of 92 men selling foodstuffs from retail trucks showed increasing efficiency with age in the handling of the trucks and in judgment in business relations with customers, as in handling of credit, but a falling off in sales. The drain on physical energies involved in the work appeared to be the chief factor.(27) Another study by Joannette E. Stanton involved the examination, through the co-operation of the employment office of a large midwestern department store, of the personnel records of some 3000 "extra" employees and persons not on the regular payroll but who came to work when called; some were sales people, some in non-sales work. Of the 3000, the largest single group was under 31 when hired, but a considerable number were hired when over 45, an appreciable number when over 60 and 7 when over 65. In general, it was found that the older the worker, the longer he was available; thus, for instance, extra sales women 30 or younger were available an average 103 workdays compared with a 412-day average for those over 60. Wage increases made on merit, not seniority, were obtained by older extra workers more often than by younger extra workers; thus 11 per cent of those under 31 obtained an increase as compared with 57 per cent of those over 60.(28) A third study, by Mark W. Smith, involving an examination of the exit records of a manufacturing company, showed that older workers were less often discharged as incompetent, and that many even 60 and over received above average ratings in ability, attendance and attitude.(29) A fourth study, by William H. Bowers, involved an attempt to arrive at a simple appraisal of the comparative performance of industrial workers of different age groups through the examination of the personnel records of 3,162 workers, ranging in age from 18 to 76, performing various duties in an organization that included a variety of operations. In general, the data seemed to indicate that age differences in traits were relatively small. Older workers were reported to learn less rapidly and to be slower, but also more frequently to show good attendance, steadiness and conscientiousness. With respect to such other traits as efficiency, job knowledge, accuracy, initiative, co-operativeness, dependability, thoroughness and tactfulness, age differences appeared to be negligible or not consistent.(30) Still another but very similar study, by Mark W. Smith, involving the examination of record cards containing the supervisors' evaluations, appraising abilities and personalities of 903 workers aged 18 to 76, who had been with a particular company for at least two years, produced similar findings. Ratings of ability (efficiency, job knowledge, accuracy, ability to learn and speed) and of personality (co-operativeness, dependability, thoroughness, steadiness and attendance) for each employee were combined to secure scores for workers in age groups 18-44 and 45 up, broken down under skilled, unskilled and clerical. The results of the study showed that traits were not greatly affected by age.(31)

Of a character very similar to the studies carried out at Ohio State University have been the studies carried out at the University of Illinois under the direction of its College of Commerce and Business

Administration. Three closely related studies were made, one on the effectiveness of older personnel in retailing, one on the effectiveness of older personnel in industry, and one on the effectiveness of older office and managerial personnel. In all three studies, department managers or supervisors, provided with a simple questionnaire, were asked to give an evaluation of all employees under their charge 60 years of age and older. Twenty-two retail stores were surveyed employing 527 workers 60 years of age and older, 39 industries employing 1,525 workers 60 years of age and over, and 22 business organizations employing 1,025 office and managerial workers 60 years of age and over. The results of the three studies combined showed that, in terms of over-all performance, 14 per cent of the workers 60 and over were rated as excellent, 28 per cent very good, 38 per cent good, 18 per cent fair and 2 per cent poor. In terms of absenteeism, dependability, judgment, work quality, work volume, and getting along with others, the ratings showed a similar pattern; thus, in terms of work volume, 24 per cent of workers 60 and over were rated higher than younger workers, 56 per cent the same and 20 per cent, less. With respect to age-connected weaknesses, 69 per cent of the workers 60 and over were reported to have none; among the remainder there was evident a general slowing down, poor health, psychological difficulties such as forgetfulness, impaired eyesight, or impaired hearing.(32)

Though such studies as those carried out at Ohio State University and the University of Illinois attempted to reach beyond the kind of evidence offered by employer opinion surveys, the data used, derived from personnel ratings, still contained a very large subjective element. If employers were not asked to express their general opinion about the older workers in their employ, they were required (or their departmental supervisors or personnel officers were) to express their opinions about particular workers in their employ. However much such persons were encouraged, as for instance in the case of the University of Illinois studies, to evaluate older workers realistically and objectively, personnel records did not provide the information that made fully possible such a realistic and objective evaluation.

Output and Performance Ratings of Older Workers

It was in an effort to break through completely such subjective evaluations, and to secure data that would reveal in measurable terms the comparative performance of the older worker on the job, that the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor and the Economics and Research Branch of the Canadian Department of Labour undertook the detailed study of the job performance of older and younger workers in particular industries or business establishments.

The U.S. Department of Labor investigation was confined to eight manufacturing establishments in two industries--footwear and men's clothing. Output data were obtained for 2,217 production workers, attendance data for 4,009, data on industrial injuries for 2,637 and records of separations for 2,734. Four indicators of work performance--output per man hour,

attendance, industrial injuries, and separations--were selected for comparing age groups since they afforded objective measures, and data in them were directly available, though not always in easily usable form, from plant records.

With respect to output per man-hour, the data showed, in general, a stable average performance level through the age of 54, with some falling off occurring in the average for the 55-64 year group. Although the declines were, in most cases, statistically significant, the indexes of output for this age group were within approximately 10 per cent of those for the age groups with peak production. Furthermore, variations in the output of persons in the same age group, it was found, were very large. Many workers aged 55-64 had output rates which were actually higher than the average rate in the age group with peak production, while many younger workers had output lower than the average output of older workers. With respect to attendance, only small differences were found among age groups, while with respect to industrial injuries the study did not provide data that could be used to make comparisons between age groups. Information on separations varied so greatly among the different plants surveyed that only that secured from four plants could be used. In general, the information on separations showed a high rate of quits and discharges for cause for workers under 25 years old and in two plants there were extremely low rates for the age group 45 to 64.(33)

The Canadian Department of Labour study of the older worker in retail trade shows results very similar. Peak performance, in terms of age, it was found, seemed to be reached between the ages of 51 and 55, older employees having recorded scores that, while still comparing favourably with those of relatively young employees, nevertheless represented a decline or levelling-off from the peak. With respect to service expectancy, it was found, by and large, that new employees in the older age brackets were more likely to remain with their employer longer than personnel hired at an earlier age. Records of absenteeism showed that although younger employees were absent owing to illness more frequently than older employees, they were not absent for as long a period in the course of a year.(34)

All these various studies of the employability of older workers, however inadequate may have been the data used by some of them, clearly offer no support to the view that younger workers rightly enjoy whatever advantage they have in securing and retaining employment. There is nothing in the evidence, that is to say, to show that younger workers are superior to older workers.

Limitations of Research Methods in the Study of Employability

Unfortunately, however, if the above conclusion is true, the converse is also true, that there is nothing in the evidence that clearly shows that younger workers are not superior to older workers. Efforts to compare the employability of older and younger workers, it must be said,

are much like efforts to compare the biological qualities of Negroes and Whites. The biological inferiority of the Negro, it can be clearly shown, is not supported by the facts. But no body of facts will prove, on the other side, that the Negro is the biological equal of the White man. Comparison of the biological characteristics of Negroes and Whites, in these terms, is beyond the reach of science. Similarly, it would appear, any attempt to compare the characteristics of older and younger workers in order to discover whether older workers are or are not inferior to younger workers is an impossibility.

In the first place, employability is not something that can be defined in terms of a particular set of worker characteristics and, in the second place, even if it could be so defined, many of these characteristics are quite beyond measurement. How can such qualities as loyalty, integrity, co-operativeness and sociability in older as compared to younger workers be measured and compared? And yet these may be the very qualities that distinguish a good from a poor staff of workers.

Studies of work performance, however, suffer from two even more serious limitations. First, they make no attempt to compare the performance of older and younger workers in all the various jobs offered in modern industry. The work force being studied is one in which a good deal of selection in terms of jobs has taken place. The old have been moved out of the jobs more suitable for the young and have been transferred or have transferred themselves to jobs where they can hold their own with the young or may even have an advantage. Thus when the performance of older workers on a job is compared with that of younger workers, the job is necessarily a selected one; it is the kind that can be performed by young and old alike. Studies comparing the accident rates of older and younger workers, using general statistical data, in particular suffer from the failure to take account of the effect of job selection upon accident risk. If older workers are selected out of more hazardous jobs, their accident rate is likely to compare favourably with that of younger workers, and, even more so, since the study of industrial accidents has revealed that lack of experience is a major factor in them, and younger workers, more of whom are new workers, may therefore be expected to have more.(35)

The second limitation of studies of work performance is still more serious than the first. Not only does a selection of jobs take place on the part of older workers, but a selection of older workers takes place on the part of employers. Unsatisfactory workers are released from employment before they become older workers. Thus, even if it were possible to compare in a meaningful fashion the performance of all older workers in employment with that of younger workers, by taking account of the process of transfer from one job to another, we still would not have learnt what we really want to know. If anything approaching sound business principles do determine employment practices, then we would expect that the performance of the older worker on the job would compare favourably with that of the younger worker on the job, otherwise he would not be on the job. To argue that prevailing employment practices operate in a

discriminatory fashion against the older worker is to argue that the kind of selection that takes place is one that does not secure out of the total body of manpower available the best possible work force. And yet it is the performance of these very workers who have been selected for employment, not that of those who have been rejected, that has been subjected to measurement and comparison. By and large, modern industry tends to secure a certain fixed level of performance on the part of workers. It is the responsibility of management to see that all the workers in its employ come up to that level of performance; the worker who is far from approaching it is quickly weeded out. On the other hand, trade unionism, and even more the informal worker group, have been concerned to see that the performance of no worker should rise much above the general level of performance; informal pressures quickly compel a moderation of pace on the part of workers who may be over-industrious. This is not to say, of course, that in any industrial plant there are not good and poor workers. But the difference in standards of performance tends not to be too great, otherwise the problems faced by management and trade unionism alike would become almost insuperable. The rationale of the wage system assumes a measurable performance that can be kept within fixed limits.

It should, therefore, occasion no surprise if it is discovered that the lowest rate of performance is found to be characteristic of the younger age group and that performance rises with age. Not only is the younger age group the least experienced but it is the one in which there has been the least selection in terms of experience. As workers become older, they become more experienced and, at the same time, become more selected. Thus if discrimination operates at all, it operates through this process of selection, and no comparison of the performance of workers who have survived the selective process can in any way reveal how discriminatory is the process.

The comparison of the performance of older and younger people outside the job situation offers a way of overcoming this fundamental difficulty but raises new, and perhaps even more formidable, difficulties if the object is that of seeking to discover whether older workers are as employable as younger workers. In the first place, however carefully the samples may be selected, there is no way of knowing, from such laboratory comparisons of the performance of older and younger people, whether the performance of all older people would compare with that of all younger people in the same way. Some bias inevitably enters into the selection. In the second place, there is no way of knowing whether the performance in the laboratory will have any relationship to performance on the job, however cleverly devised may be the testing operations. All the conditions of work cannot certainly be duplicated in the laboratory situation. Thus the older person who performs exceedingly well when subjected to various psycho-physical tests may nevertheless prove in employment an unsatisfactory worker.

III - THE WORK DISADVANTAGES OF THE OLDER WORKER

We are thus left still with no satisfactory answer to the question why younger workers, in the over-all picture, are favoured in employment. Discriminatory practices, based upon false evaluations of the worth of older workers, may account for this advantage enjoyed by younger workers, but there is no way of proving this. What does become evident, whenever any attempt is made to compare older with younger workers, whether in the laboratory or work situation, is that older workers possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from younger workers. Some of these characteristics, such for instance as judgment or conscientiousness, give them an advantage in the performance of certain kinds of jobs, other of these characteristics, such for instance as speed for movement, place them at a disadvantage in the performance of certain different kinds of jobs. Efforts to show that older workers are as employable as younger workers have led to a concentration of attention on only the first of these sets of characteristics. But this does nothing more than explain why, for certain jobs, older workers are in fact preferred to younger workers. It does nothing to explain why, for other kinds of jobs, younger workers are preferred to older.

It was the recognition of this fact that led A. T. Welford, of the Nuffield Research Unit into Problems of Ageing at Cambridge University, and a number of others who have either worked in close association with him or who have followed his lead, to approach the problem of the older worker in a very different way. Tests administered to persons of different ages within the laboratory revealed that in the performance of certain kinds of operations older persons were at a disadvantage. Such operations were those in particular that involved some sort of time stress, pacing or time pressure. Heaviness was a less important factor favouring younger workers.(36) Having thus, in a purely experimental manner, identified certain kinds of operations that older persons performed at a disadvantage, Welford and his associates turned to the study of the actual work situation as it was found in various industries to seek to discover whether performance on the job involving these kinds of operations did in fact present difficulties to older workers. Lacking any other suitable method of investigation, the answer to this question was sought through the study of the age distribution of work people on various operations and classes of operation. Such a study of age distribution, it was felt, gave a factual statement of what workpeople of different ages were doing that could be regarded as a measure of ability to the extent that older people tended to avoid or not be recruited for work that they found difficult to learn, or would move or be moved from work that they found difficult to maintain. Thus, in a study of operation in thirty-two firms reported by R. M. Belbin, evidence of age difficulties in acquiring skill was sought through the seeking out of those operations where age discrimination operated at a lower age than it did in other operations, while evidence of age difficulties in continued performance was sought through the study of the shift of workers from certain kinds of operations to other kinds, failing health being excluded as a factor in the shift. What was discovered was that age

difficulties in training occurring before the age of forty appeared on various types of operations all of which possessed the common feature of time stress, and that age difficulties in continued performance occurred where operations involved a high degree of physical bodily movement and activity, were subject to time stress, especially to pacing, and were relatively unskilled.(37)

A number of other studies, though concentrating less upon the operation and more upon the job, have followed the lead given by Welford. Such in particular have been the studies of Mr. Le Gros Clark. A general study by Le Gros Clark, in collaboration with Agnes C. Dunne, sought to show, by figures derived from the census reports, the extent of the movement out of thirty-two selected occupations of workers as they advanced in age.(38) A second study, using similar census material and the same statistical method of enquiry, directed attention to the movement of workers as they advanced in age into certain occupations, sixteen of which were selected for the purposes of the enquiry.(39)

Curtailment of Job Activity

More significant than these general statistical studies, however, have been Le Gros Clark's studies of particular occupations or industries where the statistical data used did not have to be manipulated in such treacherous fashion. A study tracing the later working lives of 320 building workers employed by the London City Council from about age 60 onwards revealed that 11 per cent of these workers had dropped out at age 63, 17 per cent at age 65, 25 per cent at age 66, 37 per cent at age 67, 45 per cent at age 68, 54 per cent at age 69 and 68 per cent at age 70.(40) A second study of building workers, this one of 315 men over 60 drawn from the employment exchanges, similarly showed that throughout their early sixties workers were subject to what Le Gros Clark described as a kind of creeping wastage owing to old age and its accompanying impairments. Seventy per cent of the sample of building workers studied had by their sixties limited their climbing, 40 per cent had restricted themselves to ground level, 40 per cent were slowing down to the extent of refusing work that involved competitive speed, 20 per cent were reluctant to work in bad weather, 80 per cent were no longer prepared to go beyond their home towns, and 25 or 30 per cent wished to gravitate to maintenance work. What the evidence suggested, Le Gros Clark concluded, was that in the building industry any body of men who had attained their sixties in a fair state of efficiency would have suffered a wastage of 40 per cent by the time they had passed their mid-sixties due to "industrial senescence."(41) Still another study of Le Gros Clark's sought to trace the careers of 300 bus drivers and conductors employed by the London Transport authority from the age of 60, at which time they were all apparently fit. Before they reached 65 more than 20 per cent of them had left through sickness, age or death, although almost three out of four of those who had left through sickness or age were able for a time to take alternative jobs of a lighter nature. At 65, departures, largely due to age or ill health, were large, and through the late sixties

departures for the same cause continued at a constant rate, though the gradient became less steep as the seventies were approached. About 15 per cent of the original drivers and 16 per cent of the conductors were still on the job at age 69.(42)

A still later study involved an examination of the work records and work descriptions of 251 older men working manually in a furniture factory. Of the 120 men between 55 and 59, it was found that at least 15 of them had gravitated to light operations of some kind; of the 73 between 60 and 64, 16 had been transferred permanently to jobs of a lighter character and ten others had been able to remain at or near their normal jobs after some concessions and adjustments had been made; one out of four of the remaining 47, though still on their normal jobs, were suspected of not quite maintaining the level of output of which they had once been capable. All together it appeared, by a liberal estimate, that about 3 in 10 of the men in their early sixties were permanently incapacitated for full normal duty and that in the case of several others some allowances had to be made. Of the 42 men between 65 and 69, 16 had been transferred to light jobs, or else had left their employer in so poor a physical condition that they could scarcely have undertaken any but the lightest work. A further 10 or 12 had been provided with work of a modified character. The remainder were still employed in their customary work but some allowances had to be made with most of them. Among the group as a whole, the proportion permanently incapacitated for their full normal duties, it was felt, could not be estimated as lower than about six in ten. Of the 16 over 70, 10 had little indication of sickness in their records. As a result of age, however, none were in full production on what once had been their accustomed jobs; all were employed on very modified or easy-going operations or on tasks of a distinctly light character. None of the men who had finally retired were physically capable of further work.(43)

Various other studies in the United Kingdom relating to the problem of the older worker have followed along lines somewhat similar to that of the Le Gros Clark studies. Though in no way influenced by the work of Welford, the survey by Thomas and Osborne of older people and their employment offered some data on the relationship between work strain and the type of job among older workers. Of those men in the survey sample still doing full-time work, 62 per cent reported that they did their work easily while 36 per cent found it a strain; though no marked differences between occupational groups were found, twice as many of those engaged in heavy labouring work reported their work a strain as in other types of work.(44) Similarly, in the study by I.M. Richardson of 489 men employed in heavy industry, it was found that the proportion of men on heavy work declined from the fifties on, and with the move off heavy work there was frequently a reduction of skill. Though illness or injury was associated with the change, increasing strain, it was felt, was probably the real cause.(45)

More closely conforming to the Welford model, however, is the investigation now being carried out by the Unit for Research of Employment of Older Workers of the University of Bristol. Selecting the light engineering industry for study since, as the investigators point out, it covered a wide range of trades involving the exercise of varying degrees of skill and employed predominantly male workers, an effort was made to discover whether there were jobs that men, as they grew older, avoided or that they found it increasingly difficult to continue working on with optimum efficiency. Findings of the study revealed that in all the seven firms investigated there were age differences associated with particular kinds of jobs and that there was a substantial correlation between the rankings by age of jobs in six out of the seven firms; the seventh was the only one that operated mass production. In one firm, more fully investigated, it was found, moreover, that there was a high correlation between the rankings in 1947 and 1955. On the whole, the jobs done by younger workers tended to be those that were generally regarded as being the more highly skilled. Thus it was concluded that the differences in age of men on various jobs were almost certainly owing to the nature of the job itself.(46)

Conclusions

Work of the new psychological unit for the study of problems of aging at Liverpool University, and of Dr. Cecil Gordon, senior lecturer in social biology at Edinburgh University, can be expected to carry still further the line of investigation first started by Dr. Welford, and from such work we shall certainly know a great deal more about the older worker problem than we know now. In terms, however, of an understanding of the whole general problem of older worker employment, it is important to keep clearly in mind just exactly what it is that this work reveals. All that Welford and his associates sought was the identification of the nature of the difficulties faced by older workers and the location of the source of those difficulties in the actual work situation. What their work demonstrates is that for certain jobs, involving certain kinds of operations, older workers are at a disadvantage compared with younger workers. But for other jobs, involving other kinds of operations, older workers, it is clear, may be at an advantage compared with younger workers. There is nothing in the work of Welford and his associates which proves, in the over-all employment picture, that older workers are not as good as younger workers or that unfair discrimination against older workers does not operate in employment. The existence or non-existence of such discrimination is taken as something beyond proof. Study of the actual work situation, in their view, however, does suggest that on the basis of findings in the laboratory situation the process of selection of workers for different jobs is indicative of work capacity. Thus the selective process, instead of being viewed as discriminatory in character because for certain jobs younger workers are preferred, is taken as the clue in seeking to discover the nature of those jobs in which older workers are at a disadvantage. Once the nature of such jobs is discovered, or so Welford would argue, the way is clear for seeking a solution to the problem

of the older worker. Efforts to convince employers that they should take on more older workers will accomplish little so long as the difficulties experienced by older workers in the performance of certain kinds of jobs remain. Any solution of the problem of the older worker, if it is to be successful, must be one which takes account of the particular characteristics of older workers in relation to the demands of particular jobs, and it is only by seeking to change some of the characteristics of older workers (by training and by the arrest or reversal on the psychological level of age changes) and some of the demands of the job (speed, complexity and physical exertion) that any real improvement can be made in the position of the older worker.(47)

Looking simply at the work situation as it is found in the modern industrial plant, Welford and his associates would appear to be on reasonably sound ground in arguing that the age distribution of the work force reflects a selection that has taken place in terms of work capacity. Workers are, within limits, shifted into those jobs that they can best perform. If this is the case, it might then be supposed that, looking at the distribution of the total work force of the nation, the selection that occurs is one that reflects work capacities in terms of the jobs that are available. The shifts of workers from one job to another, and from one industry to another, and from the ranks of the employed to the ranks of the unemployed or retired, may well develop out of the search of employers for workers who can best perform the jobs that have to be done. This, indeed, would appear in a general way to be the case.

What the work of Welford and his associates does not reveal, however, is whether there are not a great number of particular instances where this is not the case.

IV - LABOUR MARKET DEMANDS AND THE OLDER WORKER

By focussing attention upon certain selected industries it was possible to show that men of 65 or so experienced greater difficulty in their performance of certain kinds of jobs than did the younger worker. Once attention is shifted, however, from particular work situations to the larger complex of industrial employment it becomes evident that the demands of the market are of perhaps as great importance as the demands of the job in determining the age distribution of the work force. If fewer older workers, for instance, are employed in the aircraft than the automobile industry the reason may be found not in the difference in jobs but in the difference in age of the industries. Similarly, if more older clerical workers are out of employment than older manual workers, it may be because of the high attractiveness of clerical employment to younger workers. Paradoxical though it may appear, unemployment among older workers tends to be greater in those very occupations where the effects of advancing years are least important and where older workers could be most suitably employed, whereas in the roughest and unhealthiest occupations, which are avoided by young people, the proportion of older workers tends to be high.(48) The age of the industry and the state of the labour market when it was first established, the inclination of younger workers to shun certain occupations and press their way into other, changes in the birth rate and in the rate of immigration, secular trends in business, technological change and change in consumer tastes are only some of the factors that may upset the age distribution of workers in particular industries and in the nation at large. What difficulties are faced by older workers in employment, and which older workers are most experiencing such difficulties, can only be determined at any particular time by a study of labour market conditions.

Thus the study of the U.S. Department of Labor of older worker adjustment to labour market practices does much to reveal the effects of the demands of the market upon the employment of older workers.(49) An analysis of the characteristics of older job seekers and of older workers on the job in seven major labour markets brought the following among other facts to light:

1. Unemployed workers aged 45 and over possessed higher occupational qualifications than younger job seekers; relatively twice as many of the older as the younger were classified as skilled workers.
2. Manufacturing provided the last job for a larger number of the older workers than any other industry, with secondary concentrations in construction and trade.
3. Workers 45 and over held proportionately more jobs than younger workers in the skilled, managerial, sales and service occupations.

4. Employed older workers constituted a higher proportion of total employment in small firms than in larger establishments.
5. Workers 45 years of age and over had the best relative chances of being hired for a new job in the construction and service industries or if they possessed skilled, service, professional or managerial occupational backgrounds. They received lower than average proportions of the hirings, on the other hand, in durable goods manufacturing and transportation, communications, and public utilities, and in the clerical and sales occupations.(50)

There may be little in the way of definite conclusions that can be drawn from such general statistical findings as those of the U.S. Department of Labor study of labour market practices, but these findings do point the way to more detailed investigations into the characteristics of older employed and unemployed workers. Thus in the study by Thomas and Osborne of older people and their employment a special sample of 294 unemployed men between 55 and 74 were interviewed and their characteristics compared with those of workers 55 to 74 in the main sample. About twice as many of the men in the special sample, it was found, were in the engineering industries than the men in the main sample; rather more were in the miscellaneous industries and rather fewer in agriculture and chemicals. Of those who had been unemployed more than six months, more were operatives and unskilled workers.(51) Similarly in an analysis by the New York State Employment Service of the characteristics of persons seeking work at a number of City of New York Employment offices it was found that greater success was achieved in placing applicants in the building than in the personal services and that the highest rates of placements were made among the semi-skilled and the lowest among the skilled.(52) Studies carried out by a number of State Employment Security Agencies in Pennsylvania similarly revealed the close relationship between older worker employment and labour market conditions. In general it was indicated that low age limits were set on unskilled jobs that required strength and that, while there were few restrictions in the low paid and undesirable service occupations and restrictions of a not too rigid a character with respect to skilled occupations, they tended to be highly rigid in white collar jobs.(53)

A Change in Occupation in Later Years

The shift of older workers not only from one job to another but from one occupation to another does something to alleviate the effects upon older worker employment of the demands of the labour market. Thus a study carried out by the Institute of Industrial Relations of the University of California of a population sample made up of people 65 and over, revealed that in the later years of their working lives a considerable number of men changed their occupational classification. This was shown first by the fact that the occupational distribution of the older men in the sample was strikingly different from that of the entire male population and, secondly, by the fact that although 39 per cent of the men interviewed gave

professional, technical and skilled trades as their longest occupation, only 33 per cent gave such work as their final occupation, while, on the other hand, although only 30 per cent gave service, farm and miscellaneous kinds of labour as their longest occupation, 38 per cent gave these occupations as their terminal employment.(54) Where, as is most often the case, the movement is one downward in the occupational scale, no great difficulty is experienced except in terms of the financial and psychological adjustment involved. Where, however, such a downward movement is not possible, as in the case of unskilled and many white collar workers, serious difficulty may be faced in maintaining employment and many such workers are often forced to move from steady to temporary types of jobs, only finally to be forced into unemployment or out of the labour force completely.

(i) Initial Job Selection

To a very considerable extent the root of the trouble would appear to lie in the tendency of young workers, on first entering the labour force, to press in undue numbers into those occupations making small demands in terms of skill or offering a superficial attractiveness largely associated with the wearing of certain kinds of work clothes. Thus such occupations, by virtue of the very fact that they are so easily filled by the flow of younger workers into them, become dead-end occupations. More extensive vocational training, and the development among younger workers of a greater appreciation of the worth of those occupations that offer fewer immediate, but greater long-run returns, would do much to correct the imbalance in age distribution between different occupations and thus go a long way, ultimately, to solve the older worker problem.

Given the stubborn optimism of youth and its tendency not to pay too great a regard to the future, however, no public measures are likely to be successful in wholly correcting the age imbalance of certain occupations resulting from the recruitment to them of a disproportionate number of younger workers. Thus the situation will continue where great numbers of workers approaching advancing years will find themselves experiencing increasing difficulty in maintaining employment, and where, if a shift of occupation is not possible, unemployment or forced retirement may be the result. However well or badly these older workers compare with the younger workers who are replacing them in the jobs they had been doing, what would appear abundantly clear is that many of them could perform just as adequately as younger workers various other types of work if the transfer to such types of work could be made. Out of the total body of older workers, it is not, in general, those who are least physically or mentally able who are experiencing the greatest difficulty in employment.

Rather it is those older workers caught in particular types of occupations that, for one reason or another, are unfavourable to the continued employment of persons of advanced age.

(11) Mobility

The shift of workers, in their later years, to new and different jobs is not easy under the best of circumstances. Workers who have been long settled not only in one type of job but in one place of work face a very real financial and psychological hazard in a search for a new type of job, often in a different place of work. The older worker possesses much less mobility, in general, than the younger worker. He is less able--and less willing--to move about from one kind of job to another, and from one place of work to another, than the younger worker. For the vast majority of older workers this immobility associated with age is no handicap. Rather, it contributes to that characteristic of steadiness of older workers which gives them an advantage over younger workers in most forms of employment. For that small but significant number, however, who face the necessity of changing their jobs in their later lives, such immobility becomes a very serious disability.

To the extent that the immobility of the older worker is a consequence of his age, or of deeply rooted personality difficulties, not much perhaps can be done about it. Certainly, among many older workers, the aging process has exacted such a toll that rehabilitation to the point where they would be made competitive in the labour market is not possible. In addition, among those workers in the age group 45-64 who are experiencing employment difficulties there is probably not an inconsiderable number who have experienced such difficulties throughout their work lives. All that has happened at most is that age has accentuated these difficulties. For either of these groups of older workers, the provision of certain sheltered forms of employment may offer something of a solution, though, no matter how it is provided, their support must inevitably constitute something of a burden to society as a whole.

(111) Re-training

For that very large number of older workers, however, whose employment difficulties stem largely from their lack of the skills necessary for the kinds of jobs that are available, the burden imposed upon society need perhaps be nothing more than the provision of an extensive program of re-training. It may well be that the training offered the

man of 50 is a training that he turned his back on when a youth of eighteen, but whether that is the case, or whether the training required is a result of technological change that has made certain kinds of jobs obsolete, it is clearly to the public advantage, as well as to the advantage of those to whom the training is offered, to place in the hands of the older worker the kinds of skills necessary to make him an effective member of the nation's work force. Far more older persons than need be are marginal workers, and for this society pays a higher price than it would have to pay for whatever kind of older worker re-training program might be necessary.

FOOTNOTES

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